

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD MEETING
Minutes of October 23, 2018

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, K. David Maxwell, and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Trent Tucker (Highway Foreman), Brian T. Fitzgerald (Vermont Dam Removal Task Force), Carolyn Stevens (Northfield Community Development Network) Sally Davidson (Board of Recreation), Russ Barrett (Tree Warden/Northfield Conservation Commission), Michael Krause (Northfield American Legion), John Stevens (Brown Public Library Board of Trustees), Steve Davis, David Hanna, Denise MacMartin, Pauline Knapp, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Goslant called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Chair Goslant asked for Michael Krause to be added to the agenda so he can promote a scheduled community event on the Northfield Common that would commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the armistice ending the First World War.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Brian T. Fitzgerald, Vermont Dam Removal Task Force: Cross Brothers Dam.** Mr. Fitzgerald is a member of the Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) and he also worked seventeen (17) years for the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) prior to his retirement in 2013. He first addressed the Select Board members at their January 23, 2018 meeting regarding the benefits of removing the Cross Brothers Dam located on the Dog River just east of the Main Street Bridge. These include restoring the river's natural flow, encouraging fish migration, providing flood mitigation, etc. The Select Board members were supportive of this proposal at that time and Mr. Fitzgerald was to see if grant funds would become available to pay for this project. Unfortunately, the grant application earlier this summer was unsuccessful. Mr. Fitzgerald believes the presence of the Nantanna Dam further downstream from the Cross Brothers Dam may have weakened the case for its removal as the proximity of the other dam might limit the amount of stream restoration achieved. Mr. Fitzgerald will apply for another grant with a January 1, 2019, submission deadline. If this is successful, project engineers will be hired next spring to start the dam removal process. Board member Maxwell asked if this application might have a better chance of success. Mr. Fitzgerald felt it would as this time he will be focusing on the flood mitigation benefits. In addition, ANR had expressed some concerns about contaminated sediment being disturbed and moving downstream. Mr. Fitzgerald said the sediment would be tested to remove this concern. He will keep the Select Board members informed as this project develops. Chair Goslant thanked Mr. Fitzgerald for the update and wished him luck with the grant application.
- b. Carolyn Stevens, Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN): Northfield Economic Development Needs.** Ms. Stevens had distributed an open letter to the Select Board members among local business owners and/or operators requesting the municipality create the position of Economic Development Director. This person would be responsible for promoting local businesses, assisting in the expansion of existing businesses, try to bring in new or relocated businesses, research and apply for economic development grant opportunities, etc. Ms. Stevens noted there already is an economic development fund in the municipal budget and she believed these monies should be used to support this position. She added the position probably would be part-time and it is possible the person hired could be shared with another comparable community such as Williamstown. Ms. Stevens said she received very favorable feedback from local business leaders and almost all signed the letter. However, even though they signed, many of them feared the Select Board members would be resistant to this suggestion.

The first step would be to develop a job description and Ms. Stevens felt either the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) or the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC) could assist with this. She hopes the Select Board members will consider this request during the upcoming FY 2019/2020 budget meetings. Board member Maxwell said he supports the concept of creating and funding this position once a job description has been drafted and other logistical issues resolved. He agrees this matter should be discussed fully during the upcoming budget process and should an Economic Development Director be hired, he suggested an initial three (3) to five (5) year trial period to determine whether the benefits outweighed the costs. Chair Goslant said this proposal has been discussed in the past but no concrete steps were ever taken.

- c. **Russ Barrett, Tree Warden: Emerald Ash Borer Management Team Update.** Mr. Barrett last addressed the Select Board members at their June 26, 2018 meeting regarding the pending spread into Northfield of this invasive tree-killing insect over the next couple of years. At that time, the Select Board members authorized the creation of an Emerald Ash Borer Management Team to be led by Mr. Barrett that would generate an action plan. Mr. Barrett said a draft plan has been developed with several suggestions on how to address this matter. One suggestion is to mark ash trees with colorful ribbons along a stretch of road in order to demonstrate to the public how many ash trees potentially will be lost if not treated. He estimated there are about 14,000 to 15,000 ash trees located along Northfield roadsides. Another suggestion was to inoculate high value ash trees located in public areas. Norwich University now plans to treat the ash trees located in Center Park and on campus. The cost is about \$20 per inch of tree diameter and the treatment must be repeated every three (3) to five (5) years. Mr. Barrett recommends creating a municipal fund that would cover the cost of inoculating ash trees located on public lands as well as helping local property owners treat threatened trees on their lands. Manager Schulz believes there might be grant funds available to cover the expense of tree inoculation and/or the removal of infected trees. Mr. Barrett also has contacted local forester Rose Beatty in order to inventory the Town Forest for ash trees and perhaps develop a plan to harvest some high-value ash trees before they can be infected. Chair Goslant thanked Mr. Barrett for the update and pledged Select Board support for the management team's recommendations.
- d. **Michael Krause: Armistice Day 100th Anniversary Commemoration.** Mr. Krause said the Town of Northfield, Norwich University (NU), the Veterans Place, and Sorrell-Maynard American Legion Post #63 (Northfield) will be sponsoring a commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the armistice ending the First World War at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, November 11, 2018, on the Northfield Common. Vermont Governor Phil Scott, NU President Richard Schneider, Major General Steven A. Cray (Adjutant General of Vermont), General Gordon R. Sullivan (32nd Army Chief of Staff), and other dignitaries will be in attendance. Current and former NU cadets as well as all active and retired service members have been specifically invited to attend the ceremony that will include cannon fire at 10:15 a.m. Depot Square will be closed to traffic from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and all the local merchants have been contacted and are supportive. Mr. Krause noted 216 Northfield residents and 741 NU cadets served during the First World War. Five (5) Northfield residents were killed and two (2) of them (Wilmer N. Sorrell and Nelson G. Maynard) were recognized when Post #63 was renamed in their honor in February 1920. The Select Board members thanked Mr. Krause for helping to organize this event and the municipality will do all it can to make it successful.

V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

- a. **Trent Tucker, Highway Foreman.** Mr. Tucker said the stormwater mitigation work on Dole Hill Road (culvert installation, ditching, etc.) has been completed. Leaf collection is ongoing but has been delayed by poor weather and the fact the Highway crew currently is two (2) members short. Limlaw Pulpwood has brought its equipment into town so Mr. Tucker expects the roadside clearing on Barrows Road to begin soon. They may do work on other roads if time allows. Manager Schulz asked if the adjacent Barrows Road property owners have been contacted. Mr. Tucker has spoken to all but one and there have been no objections so far. Chair Goslant asked if ash trees could be removed in the process. Manager Schulz said a roadside inventory of ash trees needs to be done first. Since the infestation is not expected to be in full force for a couple years, there is time to do this properly. Board member Maxwell asked if Mr. Tucker could reach out to Limlaw to see if they would be willing to remove ash trees on private property at reduced or no cost. Mr. Tucker will look into this.

Board member Goodrich asked if all of this year's paving has been completed. Mr. Tucker said it had. Regarding the Highway crew openings, Manager Schulz said an offer has been made for an applicant to fill the Equipment Operator position but interviews are still being conducted for the other position (Grounds/Equipment Operator). Board member Maxwell noted a number of Highway vehicles were out of commission for long periods last winter and asked if there was a contingency plan if this happens again. Manager Schulz said the trucks involved have been replaced with new ones so this should be unlikely. Board member Maxwell still would like a plan in place in case something unforeseen happens. Mr. Tucker said when the 2009 International dump truck is replaced with a new vehicle in a couple years, he would like the old one retained (not traded in) so it can be used as a backup plow truck.

Board member Maxwell asked if there have been any challenges in recent months. Mr. Tucker said the roadside mowing was very time consuming and he has spoken with Manager Schulz about the possibility of subcontracting this work in the future. This can be discussed during the upcoming budget process. Chair Goslant then thanked Mr. Tucker for the update.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **October 9, 2018 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #08-19.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #08-19 in the amount of \$112,097.39. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Warrant #08-19A.** Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #08-19A in the amount of \$23,907.74. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through October 7, 2018.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Maxwell, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$90,449.29. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Mountain Alliance Update.** Manager Schulz said the Mountain Alliance member towns (Randolph, Northfield, Braintree, and Brookfield) held a meeting a couple weeks ago to discuss some matters that have arisen since the last general meeting was held over a year ago. For example, Randolph has been handling all the Mountain Alliance paperwork since the solid waste management district formed a few years ago but would like a new agreement that would spread out this responsibility among the other members. A draft document is being developed and will be discussed at the next meeting in December 2018.

In addition, the Mountain Alliance has been holding three (3) household hazardous waste collections each year (two in Randolph and one in Northfield) but the ANR now wants to require four (4). Each collection date costs about \$6,000 and Manager Schulz wasn't too interested in a suggestion that a second collection date be held in Northfield each year with the municipality responsible for the full cost. Manager Schulz said this matter will be investigated further before any decision is made. He added Northfield's membership in the Mountain Alliance has resulted in real budget savings over the past few years. When Northfield was a member of the Mad River Resource Management Alliance (MRRMA), the annual dues were \$16,000 but this has been reduced to \$7,000 with the Mountain Alliance. There also was a discussion of the lack of revenue for collectors of recyclable materials, which probably means the days of "free" recycling for Vermont residents are over. Chair Goslant noted food scraps are banned from Vermont landfills beginning July 1, 2020, so perhaps the Select Board should start considering sites where this can be stored locally.

On a related note, Manager Schulz noted Mountain Alliance and Casella Waste Management will be holding the third and final household hazardous waste collection event this year in Randolph (on Landfill Road) on Saturday, November 3, 2018, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This event is open only for residents of Randolph, Braintree, Brookfield, and Northfield. The full list of materials accepted and not accepted has been posted on Front Porch Forum, published in the *Northfield News*, and is available on the municipal website (www.northfield-vt.gov).

- b. **Union Negotiations.** Manager Schulz noted the contracts with the unions representing the municipal employees (IBEW) and the police officers (NEPBA) will expire on June 30, 2019. The local NEPBA President (Christopher Hoar) has requested contract negotiations begin in November 2018 in order to ensure good faith bargaining in a timely manner. Manager Schulz would like to discuss specific issues that may arise during these negotiations later in the meeting in executive session. There was no objection.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Economic Development Subcommittee.** Board member Miller would like this subcommittee to meet soon in order to discuss Ms. Stevens' request to hire an Economic Development Director (as well as other matters). He was wondering what were the earlier objections that prevented this from happening. Board member Maxwell said it was mainly due to the added cost of hiring an additional employee. It also was felt the economic development funds on hand should be used to assist new or expanding businesses rather than be spent on personnel expenses.

As indicated earlier in the meeting, Board member Maxwell favors the concept but would like to see the full proposal before committing one way or the other. Board member Miller agreed with the suggestion of a trial period for this position. Chair Goslant feels the focus should remain on helping to maintain current local businesses.

- b. Lease of R.E. Tucker Gravel Pit.** Board member Goodrich noted a \$500 payment to R.R. Tucker, Inc. on the warrant and asked for an explanation. Manager Schulz said the municipality is leasing one of R.E. Tucker's gravel pits on Vermont Route 12A for \$500 per month in order to store road material. Since many of Northfield's backroads are off Vermont Route 12A, this will reduce the travel time for Highway crew members looking to replenish their truckloads. In the past, they had to travel all the way to the municipal pit in Northfield Falls when they ran out of sand or gravel.
- c. Northfield-Norwich University Relations Subcommittee.** Board member Maxwell said this subcommittee met recently and another meeting is planned for the near future with (hopefully) NU President Schneider in attendance. Among topics of discussion would be the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding Northfield Police Department (NPD) coverage of the NU campus. The subcommittee would like the input of new NPD Chief John Helfant on the proposal.
- d. Town Buildings & Energy Subcommittee.** Board member Maxwell said this subcommittee also met recently and a lot of progress has been made on this year's priority list for building repairs, etc. He believes about half of the more urgent projects have been completed. There still are some heating issues at the Town Garage that need to be addressed. Board member Maxwell also would like the complete relocation of CERV out of the Town Garage discussed during the upcoming budget deliberations.
- e. James Munro "Jay" Pedley.** Chair Goslant noted the passing last week of Jay Pedley, who was a leading member of the Northfield community for many years. Mr. Pedley and his family operated Lemery's store in Northfield for over twenty (20) years and he also served as a state representative and Northfield Lister. He and his wife Sally Nadon Pedley recently spearheaded the fundraising efforts to bring a pavilion and other amenities to the new park on Water Street. Jay and Sally Pedley were recognized for their strong community spirit by being named Grand Marshals of this year's Labor Day Parade. Chair Goslant and the other Board members agreed Mr. Pedley was a popular and upbeat person who will be missed.

X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. Main Street Bridge Replacement.** Manager Schulz reported representatives from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) recently inspected the bridge and agreed it needs to be replaced as soon as possible. It now is among the top fifteen (15) bridges slated for replacement. The next step is to hire the project engineers, which Manager Schulz hopes can begin next year.
- b. National Life Group Foundation.** Manager Schulz said this foundation awards "Main Street Grants" to worthy communities. He will be submitting an application soon and he has solicited suggestions on what should be included on the request form. Among the suggestions were an upgrade of the Common Fountain, an expanded community website, extension of the sidewalk on North Main Street, etc. Board member Maxwell thought it might be good to review successful applications from other Vermont communities to determine what type of projects have been funded in the past.
- c. Town Plan update.** Manager Schulz said the Planning Commission has been focusing over the past year on revisions to the current Town Plan. The State requires these plans be updated every five (5) years and the current one was adopted in 2014. The Planning Commission members are working on updating the individual sections (i.e., "Energy," "Housing," "Transportation," etc.) and when finalized in the near future they will be available for Select Board review.
- d. DIY Weatherization Workshop.** Manager Schulz said this workshop would be held on Thursday, November 8, 2018, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Community Room located in the Brown Public Library (93 South Main Street). Topics will include home weatherization, heat pumps, and automated wood heating systems. Dinner will be provided to all workshop attendees.

- e. **Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Sludge Management.** Manager Schulz said as part of its operations the WWTF produces a thick sludge that needs to be properly disposed of. The municipality now has an agreement with Casella Waste Systems to collect the sludge and ship it to the Coventry Landfill. Unfortunately, the landfill is running out of room and efforts to expand it are opposed by neighboring landowners who complain (amongst other things) about the strong odor emanating from it. Therefore, Casella is asking sludge producers to treat it in such a way that would reduce the stench. However, this would double the cost of our sludge removal program. Manager Schulz has been looking at other options such as hiring a Canadian-based hauler to pick up and deliver the sludge over the border where there are fewer restrictions. Barre City now does this with some success. It was noted some Vermont communities have programs in place that convert the sludge into usable compost. Manager Schulz will look into this.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. **Pauline Knapp: Northfield Falls Playground Concerns.** Ms. Knapp lives on Davis Avenue very near the Northfield Falls Park and she and her husband have been plagued with excessive noise and car parking for some time. However, this has gotten worse since the new playground opened in the park less than a month ago. Particularly disturbing are the installed chimes, gongs, and drums that are used throughout the day and into the night. Since the new playground is intended for 0-6 year olds, Ms. Knapp would like a 7:00 p.m. curfew imposed that is enforced by the Northfield Police Department (NPD). She and her husband have called NPD several times about excessive noise, unsupervised children, etc. but the officers never seem to arrive in time. Ms. Knapp also would like the nearby municipal gravel pit fenced off properly from wandering children as it now an “attractive nuisance” that might result in injuries. Chair Goslant thought the Northfield Promise Community, which purchased and installed the new playground equipment, had worked out any potential problems with the playground’s neighbors. Ms. Knapp said she attended a few of their meetings and there had been no indication musical instruments would be installed in the playground. She would like them relocated to another park more removed from neighboring families. Board member Maxwell would like signage installed showing park hours and other rules of conduct such as proper adult supervision, etc. Manager Schulz will work on this. Chair Goslant also would like the new NPD Chief made aware of these problems. He thanked Ms. Knapp for bringing her concerns to the Select Board members’ attention and assured her they would be fully addressed.
- b. **Sally Davidson, Recreation Committee: “Trunk or Treat.”** Ms. Davidson said the Recreation Committee, with the assistance of the Northfield Savings Bank, will be holding their 2nd annual Trunk-or-Treat on Halloween night, Wednesday, October 31, 2018, on the on the south side of the Common. If you would like to participate in this, please call Susan Wright (485-6227) for a slot and for details. This event runs from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and she asks if you usually park your vehicle on the south side of the Common on Wednesdays, please find a different location for it after 12:00 p.m.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss possible contract negotiations with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:50 p.m.

Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 10:05 p.m. No action was taken.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager’s Office.

These minutes were revised and approved at the regular Select Board meeting of November 13, 2018.